

Mythological View of History

—With special reference to M. Eliade's works—

TAKEMARO KOGA

Themes and methodology of History of Religions have been formed and developed in the abiding tense relationship to Christian theology. So far two difficulties have presented themselves which need to be overcome today.

In the first place, History of Religions have sought on all occasions to present at all costs the objectivity of religions. Accordingly it was obliged to restrict its own study field by way of selection and elimination. In other words, it was generally accepted that its task was to be descriptive and systematic. In actual practice, however, it is still dependent for its methodology upon such branches of learning, as theology, philosophy, linguistics, anthropology, ethnology, sociology, psychology, and so forth.

In the second place, it is necessary at present for History of Religions to base itself upon the internalized standpoint, so to speak, within the contemporary religious situation, which assumes the form of radical nihilism. It is all the more getting complicated and variegated. It is being analyzed by Christian theology under the theme of secularization.

Mircea Eliade is conducting comparative study of religions through the above-mentioned themes. He asserts that we have so far neglected the following essential fact:

“... in the title of the “history of religions” the accent ought not

to be upon the word *history*, but upon the word *religions*. There is only one way of approaching religions, namely, to deal with the religious facts. Before making the *history* of anything, one must have a proper understanding of what it *is*, in and for itself."

From this viewpoint, Eliade attempts to clarify the mythical archetype of religions. Man of traditional society forms the only real world in his mythological thinking. It is none other than his authentic ontology and the expression of a mode of being. He thus attempts to inquire into what it would come to be within the spiritual situation beset with radical nihilism.

In this paper, I have attempted to make clear the structure of mythical archetype and the universal character of the religious man, according to M. Eliade's works.